

*****news release

Evans - 343-5634

INTERIOR SEES NEW REVENUE-SHARING BILL AS BOON TO WATERFOWL

The new legislation provides that many counties may elect to receive annual payments of three-fourths of one percent of the value of the refuge lands within their boundaries. The value of the lands will be redetermined every five years to reflect current values.

The older formula, in effect since 1935, provides for payment of the counties of 25 percent of the net receipts which come from operation of the refuges, such as proceeds from the disposition of animals and agricultural products and from leases.

Counties in which there are National Refuges, or portions of refuges, acquired in fee by the United States may elect either formula. The older formula will continue in effect in areas where refuges were created by changes in the use of land already in the public domain, and the primary use of the land is for wildlife.

The new law, as the old, requires that payments to the counties must be used for county roads and schools.

Congress approved an accelerated acquisition program in 1961 as an emergency measure and authorized an advance appropriation of \$105 million to be used for land purchase in a seven-year period. Actual advance appropriations to date total \$25 million.

Beginning in 1969, the advance appropriations will be repaid from proceeds of Federal "duck stamps," which migratory bird hunters are required to purchase. Meanwhile, duck stamp revenues will be used almost entirely for the part of the acquisition program not financed by the advance appropriations.

By June 30 this year the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife had acquired or contracted to purchase 164,242 acres and had obtained easements on another 90,886 acres. In the latter category, landowners agree not to drain, burn, or fill the wetlands.

Commissioner Pautzke said that while the land acquisition program for refuges has not kept pace with plans, the acreage acquired during the past four years is five times that of the previous comparable period, and it is more than all of the acquisition for refuges in the preceding 19 years.

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